

Tenth Thousand.

HOW
CATHOLICS
COME TO BE
MISUNDERSTOOD.

A LECTURE
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THE CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY AND ITS PURPOSE.

This lecture is given at the request and under the auspices of the Catholic Truth Society. The aim and purpose of this society is not, indeed, to teach Catholic truth authoritatively, as if there were no divinely established and universally recognized teacher of God's revelation, or as if that teacher had failed of his duty and commission. By no means. The aim and purpose of this society, which is composed mainly of laymen, is to assist the clergy in the teaching of truth, especially by bringing to the aid of the pulpit the power of the press. And it does this in two ways: Firstly, by the circulation, at lowest cost, of Catholic literature; secondly, by correcting through the press misrepresentations of Catholic doctrine that may get into the public prints, thus giving correct statements of our belief and worship. The press, therefore, is the domain in which it seeks to do its work. Its purpose is an acknowledgement that Catholic truth desires nothing so much as broad daylight; that the opposition of our separated brethren to Catholic truth is owing mainly to misunderstanding of our teaching; that religious dissensions can best be smoothed over, divested of all harshness and hatred, if not completely done away with, by correct information and widest publicity. Its end is peace and concord, not war. It reaches that end by showing that there is no real reason for war, and that our religious opponents, in attacking us, in most cases attack an imagined foe, a mere phantom, and not the real Catholic Church, at all.

There is not in the world a field more promising to such a worker as the "Catholic Truth Society" than this land and this city. The American people are open to truth and are lovers of fair play. They will not knowingly tolerate the misrepresenting of any individual or set of individuals in so serious a matter as religion, especially of a church which, in their midst and before their eyes, is seen to be, by the test of their personal experience, the source of many and great benefits to society. Political campaign methods are limited to the sphere of partisan politics, and we all know what value to set on them. There is in the people of the United States no disposition to transfer such methods to religion, or to allow them in that sphere which is most sacred and precious to every man—conscience. Like its rivers and lakes and prairies, its growing cities, its prospects, hopes and ambitions, the mind of the West is broad. The West has thrown its gates wide open to all comers, and means that all shall find here, with a home, respect; a generous spirit that has come down from the earliest white explorers and settlers, whose names and religion have been perpetuated in our waterfalls, counties and towns. As in the past, so in the present, Providence has given to the Catholic Church in the Northwest leaders who, by their intelligence, blameless lives and fearless boldness for truth, have forced from the community more than respect, admiration and affection, and have done away with prejudices of the grosser sort, if not in all minds, at least in the minds of the thinking and sensible portion of our non-Catholic fellow citizens. No better field, therefore, than this for the "Catholic Truth Society."

It is in the same spirit of peace and kindness that I wish to deal with the subject of this lecture, and if, in the course of it, I am carried away into any tone that trenches, ever so lightly, on bitterness, or quarrelsome complaint, please lay it to literary form or rhetorical impulse, and not to any offensive feeling toward those who sincerely and honestly differ from us. That there are grave religious misunderstandings between Cath-

olics and non-Catholics is painfully evident; that they should be explained and thus come to an end, is a consummation devoutly to be wished. As diagnosis must go before the cure, so also will it be a great step in the direction to mutual agreement to know the causes, the sources of the misunderstanding, and to point out by that very showing that there is a means of coming to an understanding. My aim is not to prove Catholic truth, nor any part of it, but to indicate what it is that keeps us apart, how the barriers between us may be let down and the obstacles removed. The substance and main argument of this lecture are taken from a work by Cardinal Newman, "The Present Position of Catholics in England." What is mine is only the task of selecting and summarizing.

THE MEANING AND THE WAY OF PREJUDICE.

The most fruitful source of misunderstanding in religious matters is prejudice. By prejudice is meant a prejudgment, or a judgment by anticipation; a judgment which is formed prior to a particular question submitted to us, yet is made to bear upon it and decide it. Webster's definition of the word comes to the same thing: "An opinion or decision of the mind formed without due examination; a bias or leaning toward one side or the other of a question from other considerations than those belonging to it; an unreasonable predilection or prepossession for or against anything formed without proper grounds or before suitable knowledge." It is true, the past bears on the future, and from what has been we may probably conjecture what will be. In this sense and to this extent prejudgment is admissible; but, mind well, there is in this case a previous knowledge on which the prejudgment is based, and which gives it, not, indeed, certainty, but a kind of probability. Such a prejudgment is vague and general; it is not more than an opinion or an inference of greater or less strength; it cannot reasonably, and should not, be taken as infallible; it cannot dispense with the evidence that is adducible for the particular case or question presented for consideration.

Did any man rest on prejudgment so entirely as to refuse to hear the other side and sift the evidence that was brought against the prejudgment, especially as to conclude at once and without examination that nothing could be said for the opposite side, such a man would not act reasonably; he would not be fair-minded; his prejudice would cease to be excusable, and become obstinacy and injustice.

I can allow for the force of prejudice. In fact, we approach almost every question that concerns us with a leaning, and, as I have just explained, prejudice, in this sense, has its rightful use, under conditions. Now, persons who all their life have heard nothing but what is bad of the Catholic Church, naturally entertain, as a part of their mental store, a settled opinion that it is bad; and, when some fresh charge is made against the Church, such persons, as a matter of course are predisposed to credit the charge without stopping to consider the evidence, and even before the evidence is put before them. They judge of this particular charge on the ground of that habitual judgment which they inherited as a tradition and has become part of their religious training. Now, that this mode of acting should be carefully guarded against by every fair-minded man, is a first principle in justice; a principle that constitutes our notion of what a judge and a jury should be; a principle that is the palladium of liberty, the only shield against injustice and tyranny. Our non-Catholic friends should not pronounce sentence on us on the strength of their traditional idea of us, but should allow the actual evidence and our account of our case to have a fair chance against their inherited prejudgment.

Consider the conduct of the man who, through thick and thin, is wedded to his religious prejudice. He takes it for granted that the Catholic is mistaken; that he is a knave if willfully mistaken, a fool if unwillingly. Let some accusation against the Church come up, he siezes on it at once. Evidence goes for nothing; likelihood is everything. What he hears is just what he expected to hear; it is in keeping with all he has been

told of the church from a boy up. Suppose there comes an absolute, explicit, total denial of the charge, or a refutation on unimpeachable authority, a correcting of the misrepresentation and an accurate statement. The prejudiced man simply discredits what we say and sets it aside, not giving it the slightest attention. Do we insist so that he must attend, he draws himself up, looks stern, becomes more positive and louder in the assertion of his prejudgment and our guilt; or, he winks and smiles, and says, "Sleek fellows, those Catholics; they have a way out of every scrape." Ask him what he knows of the Church by personal knowledge, of her teaching, her worship, her history; he blesses his stars that he knows nothing about the matter, and never will. Before such a disposition of mind and will our work seems well nigh useless. Often we may have said to ourselves, after having taken up and refuted some charge or other, "What can be said in answer to this, now at last the falsehood is disposed of?" Vain hope! It is the nature of prejudice that it is ever reproductive, and comes up scowling from every defeat. When truth makes the race with prejudice it has no more chance than when it makes the race with a lie. The favorite field in which prejudice runs riot is the past or the far distant, some remote period in history or some remote spot on the globe; because there is less danger of its being brought unpleasantly face to face with actual facts. I will give an instance of what I mean:

THE ORIGIN OF PROTESTANT PREJUDICE.

It is an inherited notion with non-Catholics that Christianity, which was very pure in its beginnings, became very corrupt in the middle ages, and is again very pure now in orthodox Protestantism. There arose in the middle ages a tyrannical institution called the Church, that swallowed up Christianity and has not yet disgorged its prey. Then all was dark and horrible, and worse than paganism; neither God nor Christ were known; the virgin, the saints, the pope, images and relics were worshipped instead. The *Homilies of the Church of England*, an authoritative document in

that church at the present day, says that "In the pit of damnable idolatry all the world was, as it were, drowned, and so continued until our age (the sixteenth century), by the space of above eight hundred years, so that laity and clergy, learned and unlearned, all ages, sects and degrees, of men, women and children of whole christendom—a most horrible thing to think of—have been at once drowned in abominable idolatry. That was the time of apostasy, when the pope was the man of sin and the Church the mother of abominations." So far the Homilies; turn we now to the *Westminster Confession*.

According to this document "Papists are idolaters." The assertion is found in Section 3 of Chapter XXIV. This section, which is on marriage and divorce, declares that "Such as profess the true reformed religion should not marry with infidels, papists or other idolaters." It is intended to strike out the words "and other," and thus take the offense and sting out of the assertion. But if the revision is to be complete, much more must be done. In Chapter XXIX, on the "Lord's Supper," it is declared that "The papist sacrifice of the mass, as they call it, is most abominably injurious to Christ's one and only sacrifice, * * * that doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of Christ's body and blood, commonly called transubstantiation, by consecration of a priest, or by any other way, is repugnant, not to scripture alone, but even to common sense and reason, overthroweth the nature of the sacrament and hath been and is the cause of manifold superstitions, yea, of gross idolatries." If this be true, Catholics would be and would remain idolaters, though the general assembly and all the presbyteries should drop the two words "and others," as above stated. In the sixth section of Chapter XXV we read that "The pope of Rome is antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ and all that is called God." This also is to be stricken out by the revisionists, I believe. But if the revision of the Confession is to be thorough on this as on the preceding point, a

great deal more will have to be amended or thrown out. However, I am not dealing with revision, nor with the proving or disproving of the two charges that papists are idolaters and the pope antichrist. I am just now engaged in making another point; it is only in view of this point I have quoted from the Homilies and the Confession. The point is this: I have said that there was in Protestant minds a prejudice about the middle ages, during which came in all the corruptions of the Church, lasting until this day; and you see how and where and when this traditional Protestant prejudice against the Church originated. We have arrived in those authoritative documents at the source of the prejudice, the first link of the chain, the first title deed on which the inheritance rests. At this point of our progress I have an important consideration to put before you, to which I invite your serious attention.

DISHONEST USE OF PROTESTANT PREJUDICE.

Non-Catholics have been taught what they hold concerning us in the nursery, in the school-room, in the lecture class, from the pulpit, from the religious publication, often from the secular newspaper, in society. Private judgment in matters of religion is their principle; in practice they go by tradition; they take their views of the Church on hearsay. Now, tradition has its proper use as an initial means of gaining notions about historical or other facts; it is natural and necessary to trust it when it has the proper qualifications. But we ought not, on the score of mere hearsay, to keep our eyes and ears shut against every other evidence, every other means of proof; we ought not be so furiously certain and so energetically positive that we know all about the matter in question, when our only source of information is a partial and partisan tradition. There is not, in such an inherited tradition, sufficient reason to make us absolutely sure, much less to make us angry with those who take a different view of the matter. There was, among a section of the Jewish people, a tradition, not all of divine, but of human origin, that their Messiah was to be a great temporal ruler. On the

strength of that tradition they reviled, rejected and crucified their true Messiah, who did not come to them in the guise of temporal greatness. I consider the chief merit of "Ben Hur" to be the bringing out of this contrast between a false tradition and the reality. The source of the anti-Catholic prejudice is the secession of the sixteenth century.

Now, I am not at present inquiring whether in the sixteenth century there were or were not good reasons for that secession, nor consequently whether the traditions then originated and since inherited, by which non-Catholics prejudge the Catholic Church, is or is not well founded. I simply state the fact that we are so prejudged; and, moreover, I assert that, since Protestants recognize no teaching body authorized to instruct them in religion, no infallible voice to guide them, they have no rational right to assume their tradition to be sufficiently grounded so as to safely judge and condemn us on that evidence alone, but should make a personal examination of the value of such tradition, and test it in its first link, in its very source, or judge the Church only by their actual knowledge of it. How many have done this? Ask any Protestant out of the mass why he believes that our religion is untrue, dangerous, absurd; and he will not say, "I have had good actual proofs of it; I know Catholic teaching too well to doubt it; I am well read in history and can vouch for it." He will most likely say, and, if he is honest, he can only say, "Why the thing is too notorious for proof; everyone knows it; everyone of our books asserts it; it has been so ruled long ago, and there's an end of it. What! Am I to be told in this nineteenth century that we must begin history over again and have to reverse our elementary facts? To tell me, at my time of life, that Catholics do not rate sin at a fixed price; that they may not get absolution for a sin in prospect; that they do not make images and bread their God; that they would not burn Protestants if they could; that they are not constantly plotting to destroy schools and exterminate education; that they

would not, if only they had it in their power, bring the whole country under a foreign despotism!" Why, he is perfectly sure of it; it must be true, because all the ministers say so. It is preached in all the churches every Sunday!

THE NURSERY OF PROTESTANT PREJUDICE.

Ah, yes! So it is! So it is. And it is in virtue of a practice in direct contradiction to the first principles of Protestantism that prejudiced Protestants are so very sure of their prejudice, and believe so firmly the traditional account of the Catholic Church. Their principle is private judgment; their practice is implicit faith in a ministry which, by its own confession, has no authority to teach. Many, indeed, in that ministry, have given up teaching, and flung to the winds all clear-cut creed to practice with glittering generalities. But one mission they have had from the beginning, and still pursue with wonderful perseverance and success—they keep up the anti-Catholic tradition and foster prejudice. All forms of teaching and no form of teaching are tolerated, and by the Protestant ministries of all denominations; no kind of opinion comes amiss or fails to find a home there; but the Church it cannot tolerate. Protestantism agrees to differ with its children on a thousand points; but on one point all ministers agree and stand in serried ranks—"Rome is false and Catholicity is corrupt Christianity."

I cannot resist the temptation of transcribing a page from an article by James Parton, "Our Roman Catholic Brethren," in the *Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1868. He got it from a work that was published in England about the year 1867, under the title, "The Comedy of Convocation." Archdeacon Jolly, one of the speakers at the imaginary convocation, explains the operation of a new society, which, he said, was called "The society for considering the best means of keeping alive the corruptions of popery in the interests of gospel truth." He had been favored with a copy of the prospectus. It appeared from this document, and it could be con-

firmed from other sources, that a deputation was sent last year to Rome in order to entreat his holiness *not* to reform a single popish corruption. A handsome present was entrusted to the deputation, and a liberal contribution to the Peter's Pence Fund. The motives set forth in the preamble of the address presented to his holiness were, in substance, of the following nature. They urged that a very large body of most respectable clergymen, who had no personal ill will toward the present occupant of the holy see, had maintained themselves and their families in comfort for many years exclusively by the abuse of popery; and, if popery were taken away, they could not but contemplate the probable results with uneasiness and alarm. Moreover, many eminent members of the profession had gained a reputation for evangelical wit, learning and piety, by setting forth in their sermons, with all their harrowing details, the astounding abominations of the church of Rome. The petitioners implored his holiness not to be indifferent to the position of these gentlemen. Many of their number had privately requested the deputation to plead their cause with the amiable and benevolent Pius IX. Thus the great and good Dr. McNickel represented respectfully that he had filled his church and let all his pews during three and twenty years by powerfully illustrating Romish superstitions. An eminent canon of an old Roman Catholic abbey owed his distinguished position, which he hoped to be able to retain, to the fact of his having proved so clearly that the pope was antichrist, and earnestly entreated his holiness to do nothing to forfeit that character. Finally a young clergyman, who had not hitherto much distinguished himself, having often, but vainly, solicited a fair member of his congregation to favor his evangelical attachment, at length hit upon a new expedient, and preached so ravishing a discourse on the "Matrimonial Prohibitions of the Romish Church," and drew so appalling a picture of the domestic infelicities of the Romish priesthood, that on the following Monday morning, the young lady made him an offer of her hand and fortune. Would his holiness

please take all this into his kindest consideration?"

"Ridentem dicere verum quid vetat?"

But not to treat my subject as in jest;

Yet may not truth in laughing guise be dressed?

As masters fondly soothe their boys to read

With cakes and sweetmeats."

It is the way with human nature to start with vigor and then to flag. Years tell upon the toughest frames, time introduces changes, prejudices are worn away, asperities are softened, views opened, errors are corrected, opponents are better understood, the mind wearies of warfare. So would it have been with these religious dissensions and misunderstandings and prejudices, if there had been no active, persistent force to guard against and oppose this tendency of the mind and nature of man. And so prejudices against us live in spite of all we can do to put them down, and will live until the honest Protestant man refuses to see through the eyes of other men, no better sighted than himself; until he decides to use his own mind in the examination of religious matters, and lay aside his inherited prejudices and judge the Catholic Church on rational, actual evidence. She is here in our midst; let him open his eyes and look at her.

Let me not be misunderstood. I do not assert that all that is said in disfavor of Catholics is the outcome of prejudice. Some accusations there are to which we plead guilty, and are the first to confess. They are accusations against individuals within the Church, not against the Church as a teaching body. In the Church, good and bad, the wheat and the tares are mixed. Scandals must come and do come, even within our own bosom. We acknowledge it, and grieve for it. We get, however, for this acknowledgment, little credit from prejudiced Protestantism; this is not what it wants. We show that the scandals and evils that arise among us are not in virtue of, but in spite of, our teachings; prejudice wants them to be the direct and logical outcome of our teaching; the teaching must be the tree that bears such fruit, so that prejudice may get the chance to argue from the quality of the fruit to the

quality of the tree. However, the strangest inconsistency that prejudice can be guilty of is exhibited in this very matter. When the scandal and the scandalizer have been expelled from the Church, as evil humors are driven out of a healthy body, prejudiced Protestantism takes them up as choice subjects and morsels. Experience, it would seem, ought to teach them to be on their guard against such brands plucked from the burning, for how often has not the viper turned against the bosom that warmed it! However, there is such a longing for something, anything from the pope's garden, that even a weed over the wall is as welcome as the flowers of May. I advance this point as evidence of prejudice run to imprudence and folly. I am happy to say that instances of this kind are becoming rarer year by year.

THE DAUGHTER OF PREJUDICE.

The Church is a living body, world-wide, speaking many tongues, one and the same everywhere; she is here. Well, one would think that, if Protestants really wished to get at the truth about us, if they would know what we really teach, why we practice this or that form of worship and ritual, they would come to us for information. When a sensible man is deeply anxious to get at the truth on any point, he simply discards reports and gossip and betakes himself to headquarters. The live newspaper that wants the correct account of an affair does not pick up and dish up the street rumors, but dispatches one of its best reporters to the scene of the event to see and interview the actors themselves or the immediate eye witnesses. It is an axiom that every one is to be trusted in his own art, otherwise expressed by, "Let the cobbler stick to his last." Frenchmen are the best masters of French; pilots the best steersmen on the river. Catholics ought to know Catholicism better than non-Catholics. Military men do not show any very great respect for the criticism of civilians, nor lawyers and physicians for the crude notion in their respective spheres of laymen. If you want to know and feel what pure undiluted sar-

casm is, go try instruct an old editor how to run his paper so as to make it pay him and please his readers. But any one with information at second hand, picked up on the byways and highways, with crude notions handed down by untested tradition, with definitions unapproved and assertions unproved by respectable evidence, understands our religion better than we do, is qualified to instruct or attack Catholics as to the doctrine, the morals, the discipline of their church. Our theological libraries are vast; our friend has the whole of the ponderous tomes in a nutshell; our doctrines are couched in technical language, to understand which, as for the language of law, a special training is needed; he sees no obscurity whatever in our verbal statements; they are clear to him at first sight.

In consequence he is forever mistaking one thing for another, and thinks it does not signify. He gets hold of some dreadful text torn out of its place from some theologian, and he waves it triumphantly, "This is what they teach; this is what they are." Where did he get that garbled text? Not from the original, bless his innocent soul and yours! No, but from the Protestant tradition, a second-hand store, whose stock is mostly in the line of misfits. He gives his own definition of such terms as Worship of the Virgin, Immaculate Conception, Transubstantiation, Extreme Unction, Confession, Absolution, Indulgences, Celibacy, Vows, Infallibility, Temporal Power, Primacy, and then falls into fits of pious horror at the dreadful things. He forgets that it is for us to say what we mean by these technical terms. It really looks as if he were determined that he shall not know us, and that we shall not be known as we truly are. Conceited ignorance is the natural sequel and own daughter to prejudice. There are books in abundance, written by Protestant students of the Bible, some of them admirable, some of them the very best of their kind, and used by Catholic theologians, explaining difficult passages of the old testament by means of the manners and customs which, at the present day, are in use among the Orientals. A very sensible proceeding this, and worthy of imitation in the

case before us. Let our technical language, our seemingly strange forms of worship, our dogmas and our precepts, be interpreted by the understanding, the customs and the authorized explanations of the Catholic Church.

WHAT ARE FIRST PRINCIPLES.

So much for prejudice. I now pass on to consider quite another class. The great majority of our separated brethren in this land wish to be fair to us. They are indignant at the false and distorted views taken of us. They despise the prejudices that are directed against us. They readily acknowledge the grandeur, the beneficent force of the Catholic Church. They wish to know about it; they even enter on the study of it; but on nearer view they cannot accept it; they find it to be against the principles of their reason; it runs counter to truths which to them are assumed premises. They conclude, therefore, that faith is some hidden gift which is not to be theirs. And as Christianity and Catholicity are, in their opinion, one, they give up religion altogether as some land of promise which is shut against them, and settle down into complete religious indifference as to creeds and articles of belief, satisfied with the common, ordinary dictates of reason and general morality; they aim at being honest men, as they say, and at nothing more. This is an attitude of mind that deserves our deepest respect, our truest sympathy and our closest study. What is the account of it?

There are such things as first principles; that is, truths held without proof, as being self-evident. Everyone who thinks at all must have, as foundation of his thinking, such first principles. When you make a statement of any kind and are asked your reasons for it, you begin a series of "because," and come to a last "because," which is your first principle, upon which you base all your preceding propositions, and for which you have no proof and need none, because it is, to you, self-evident. First principles are the means of proof, and are not themselves proved; they are absolute monarchs in the realm of thought and reason. But

first principles may be true and may be false, and there are ways of unlearning them when they are false. If they are true they are like the best and wisest of fathers to us; but if they are false they are like the most cruel and baneful of tyrants. Moreover, because they are elementary in our thinking, they may be considered almost as part of our mind and moral being. For this reason we are not likely to be aware of them, being so close to us, unless we have been specially trained to mental introspection, the rarest and the most difficult of all sciences. The real account of all disputes and controversies is this, that each of the two disputants starts from his own principle, which he takes for granted, which he does not observe he is assuming, and which, even if he did, he thinks too plain to mention, much less to prove. For this reason it is laid down in logic as a first lesson—which for being the first is often neglected or only half applied in practice—to define exactly your terms and agree on the starting point, else there will be no reaching the same ultimate conclusion. Nay, the two disputants are not on the same track at all, and, therefore, will never come in together. In fact, controversy about details or subordinate propositions is waste of time. The real debate is on the original premises, and generally ends by getting back to such premises.

THE WRONG USE OF PRINCIPLES.

Now, the Catholic Church has its first principles, and Protestantism has also first principles of its own, and I acknowledge the right of each, so far. But Protestantism has no rational right to judge Catholic doctrines by Protestant first principles, as if they were absolutely certain; they are not absolutely certain, since they are denied by us. The Church refuses to be judged and measured by a rule she repudiates as false. To do so is to beg at the start the whole question. There is a call here for revision of those very principles which are quietly assumed as granted, and then coolly applied as tests. Now, the men whom I have lately described are the victims of this intellectual

deception; they apply to Catholic doctrines first principles which the church does not allow, but which they hold as evident and do not dream of calling into question. This being the case, they cannot but arrive at a conclusion contrary to the Church, and are thus thrown back from a goal they desire to reach into religious indifference and mere naturalism. They should make the start further back and look well into their first principles. The true philosophic man, like the traveled man, knows many cities. He may hold principles, which he cannot accept, to be false and dangerous; but he will, previously try to enter into such principles, to enter into the minds of those who hold them; he will consider in what their strength lies and what can be said for them; he will do his best to analyze and dissect them; he will apply himself to the task of exposing and disproving them. One thing, however, he will not do; he will not ignore them; he will not coolly discard them and set to work to apply to a structure built upon them another set of principles quite contrary. Do not judge Catholic doctrines by Protestant first principles which we do not grant; and if you do not take our first principles as measure of our development of them, as measure and test of the conclusions we draw from them, then, in the name of common sense, let our particular doctrines alone, and apply yourselves to the task of destroying and disproving our first principles. That is the shortest way to end all difficulties.

Right here I point out the most obvious illustration of the preceding considerations. The Protestant rule of faith that Catholics disown is obtruded on us as a necessary basis of discussion; that is, as an undoubted first principle which it is thought absurd not to accept in any controversy about doctrine. We consider that the Bible is not the whole of God's revelation; that the apostles left behind them a number of doctrines not in writing, but living in the mind of the Church. Protestants deny this. They have, let us say for argument's sake, a right to deny it. But they have no right to assume their contrary assertion to be true

without proof, and to use it as self-evident, and to triumph over us as beaten and silenced, because we will not admit it. Suppose I say that I am not bound to prove some particular point of doctrine in debate simply by scripture. The Protestant considers scripture the only basis of discussion. Because I will not accept this basis, but want it proved, he turns from me to the crowd, as if to say, "You hear; he denies an axiom; he demands proof of a first principle that is self-evident; his doctrine cannot stand the light of scripture."

Here is one more illustration which will bring me back to that class of non-Catholics with whom, mainly, I am concerned in this section of my lecture. A man is struck with the beauty and eloquence of the rites and liturgy of the Church; he likes to be present at them; but he says that they are addressed to the imagination only, and have nothing to say to the reason; that they are, in fact, theatrical, and devoid of rational grounds. Now, why does he say so? When driven to give reasons and put through his series of "because," he comes at last to a point where he stops, not having any further advance, and asserts that the divine being does not need propitiating, and that prayer, as being against the constancy of nature's laws, is irrational. Very well; that is his first principle. Useless to argue about details of ritual with one who does not agree with you in the principle that lies at the basis of ritual. But, look! What has he done? He has judged ritual not by our principle, but by his; he has begged the whole question in taking for granted the truth of his principle. For such a state of mind there is just one remedy—revise first principles. The previous question—previous to the study and understanding of revealed religion—is just this: Which set of first principles is true, true in reason, true in natural, philosophic logic? This is a frequent cause of misunderstandings between Catholics and non-Catholics, and I label it "false assumptions."

THE WORK WE MUST DO.

How do Catholics come to be misunderstood?

Through prejudice and false assumptions. Prejudice and false assumptions? Why that is as much as to say that Protestantism has set up an imagined Catholicism as a scarecrow? Yes, so it has; and at the sight its children, without giving thought, scream and hide from the ghostly thing. A scarecrow will protect a field of grain from birds for months. Would a lay figure of a policeman secure against burglars a jeweler's store? Why not? The bird is guided by instinct and sense—perception. Man acts on reason and personal examination. He knows that self-movement is an essential characteristic of life. He finds on examination that this essential note of life is wanting to this lay figure of a policeman. He forms a certain judgment that it is lifeless and fears it not.

Let Protestants, discarding the inherited instinct and prejudice of their birth, childhood and youth, test, by personal examination, the Church they have been taught to despise, hate and dread, test it for themselves by the great principles of rational truth; let them honestly inquire from that church, not from its foes, what it does teach and hold; let them use in regard to Catholicism that reason and logic which are the birthright and mark of man. The charge has been made, and can not be disproved, that Protestantism, as a system, is not logical. No reformer's name is found in any history of rational philosophy, for no reformer based his protest and his teaching on logical proof. Their chief reproach against theologians of the Church was the employment of human arguments and rational evidence for the fact and matter of divine revelation. Luther's appeal to the Bible alone, Calvin's appeal to predestination, Cranmer's appeal to royal supremacy, rest only on their individual assertion, and are not founded in reason, nor are they capable of rational proof.

The "Divine Simplicity of the New Gospel" has certainly this advantage, that as it was not grounded on any logical argument, neither could it be upset by logical argument. What impression can logic make on prejudice and false assumptions? To use logic as a

weapon against such armor is like slashing rock with a Damascus blade. Prejudice is impervious to reason. Arguments do but glance thereon. Have we not been witnesses to this phenomenon in our own city last winter? By a masterly demonstration of irresistible logic Archbishop Ireland proved that Protestantism was not a religion satisfactory to the intellect of man. What reception was given to that argument? No direct and logical answer came back in return, but we did get, from many quarters, a louder reassertion of the traditional prejudices, misstatements and false assumptions on which the protest against the Catholic church is founded. No! A thousand times no! The reformers did not set human reason free; they gagged it and turned it out of court. What, then, can we do but call the attention of all honest Protestants to the fact, of which they may well be unaware, owing to the environment in which they were reared, that their judgment of the Church is founded on prejudice and false assumptions, and rouse them to the duty of first laying these aside and then dealing with the Church rationally?

And now, to draw a practical conclusion as to all that I have been saying, and to apply that conclusion to you, gentlemen of the Catholic Truth Society, and to your work:

First—We want a laity, not arrogant, not rash in speech, but men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold and what they do not, who know their creed so well that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it.

Second—Put the Church and her teachings before the world, such as they are. The truth about us will destroy prejudice, dispel ignorance and break down the Protestant tradition against us.

Third—Give the reason and explanation of our belief and worship to all comers. This will bring matters of detail up to first principles, and force non-Catholics to look to their assumed premises and assure themselves of their value, and, anyhow, will force them to look at

our premises, and thus will convince them that we are not without reasonable ground to stand on.

Fourth—Do this perseveringly, and right here in our own city. Sensible men judge of a world-wide church by that section of it which is in their midst; they can have no other safe standard of judgment. Let the channels of public thought that our fellow citizens are in contact with be made to convey the truth about us, be called to account for any loose statement concerning us. Your own neighborhood is the field in which you are to do your work and exercise your vigilance. If your movement spreads, and every city, town and village in the land gets up a "Catholic Truth Society," then, indeed, will the Church in America stand forth as "The light of the world," as "a city seated on a hill," as "a standard set up among nations," inviting all beneath its folds.



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